

Lieutenants shoot, punch their way to the top

Story and photo by Ann Chris Powell
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Two married Team Malmstrom members were once Olympic hopefuls.

First Lieutenants Frank and Maria Vassar, 341st Security Forces Squadron and 341st Medical Group, respectively, have been involved in sports, both professional and amateur, long before they joined the military.

Maria, a native of Houston has been involved in archery for five years. Her husband, Frank, a native of Spokane, Wash., has been involved in boxing before he was a teenager.

Their paths crossed while they were at an Olympic training center in Colorado Springs, Colo. There, Maria Vassar first witnessed her future husband box.

"The first time that she saw me box I was knocked down," laughingly said Frank. "It was the first time that I was ever knocked down. I got back up and went on to win the match by decision."

Maria began archery during her tenure at Texas A&M. From there, she kept training and eventually went on to the Olympic Training Center at Colorado Springs. There, she made the cut but didn't make the team. She was one of 16 other archers to make the cut.

"I was trying out for the 1992 Olympics," Maria said. "I made the cut, but I didn't make the team. I wanted to try out for the 1996 team, but I met my husband and I decided to get married."

"I like archery because you can do it by yourself or with a group of friends," Maria said. "There are even blind and one-armed archers."

Although she's attempted to take her archery skills to the forest to hunt, she admits that she has never come home with a prize.

"I've gone hunting a couple of times, but I've never killed anything" she said. "I think that they smell me."

On the other side, Frank had a career in boxing since

he was in second grade.

He had more than 100 amateur fights until he turned professional.

"As an amateur, I have 249 fights with 117 knockouts," said Frank. "As a pro, I'm 15 and one with 10 knockouts."

Frank also met a few famous boxers and also received a little help with his Spanish by a famous boxer.

"I know Evander Holyfield, (Mike) Tyson, Shane Mosley. Oscar de la Hoya helped me with Spanish in high school," Frank said. "I know all of them."

After his commissioning, he went to San Antonio to talk to the Air Force boxing coach. The coach told him that he could go and work out at the gym.

"I was originally supposed to be stationed in San Antonio, but I ended up being stationed here so that put a damper on things," Frank said.

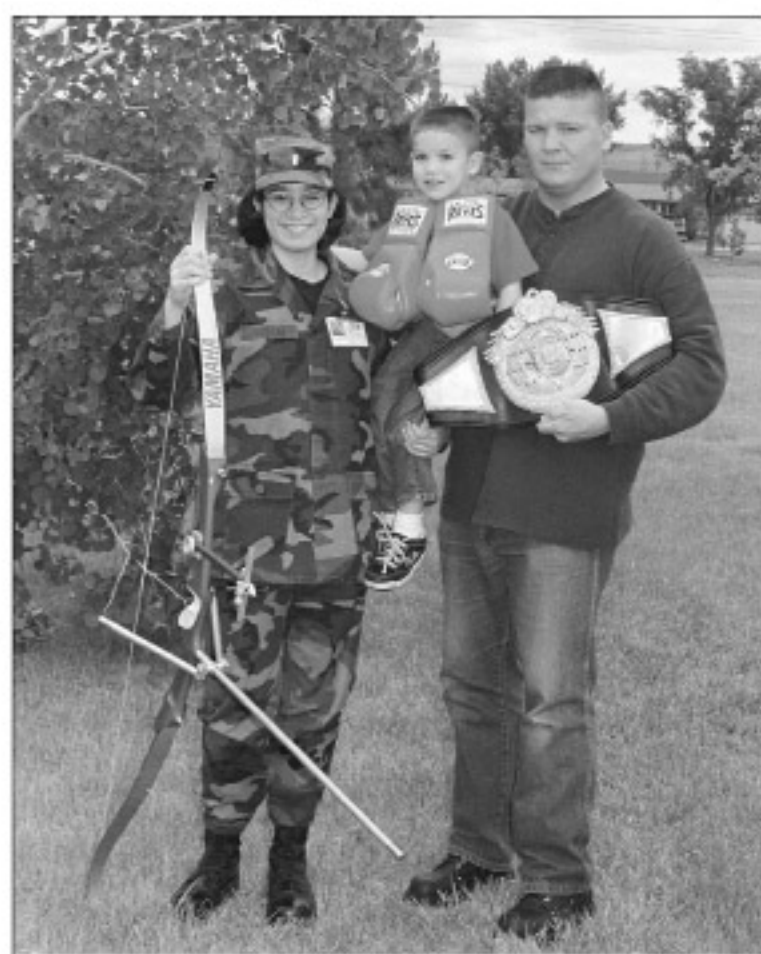
"When I was little, everyone else had their idols, but I was the guy that dreamed of myself as the world champion, Frank said.

Some of the accolades that Frank won during his boxing career are being the International Boxing Association's Intercontinental champion, the National Golden Glove's champion and the U.S. Sports Festival.

With all the experience Frank has gained throughout his boxing career, he may be able to give good advice to those that need it.

One piece of advice that Frank gives is to pick a boxing club that teaches defense first and offense later so people can learn to defend themselves.

Although Frank may have more than enough advice to go around, his wife has learned a few things from different



First Lts Maria and Frank Vassar, 341st Medical Group and 341st Security Forces Squadron, respectively, stand with their son, Frank Jr., Wednesday.

people that she has met throughout her career, as well.

"I think athletics has kept us more disciplined and its exposed us to different cultures and people," Maria said.





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Bartha Van Soltner
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, 1980





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